



City of Lowell - Planning Board

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 23, 2021 6:30 p.m.

City Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, City Hall

City of Lowell, 375 Merrimack Street, Lowell, MA

Remote Participation Optional via Zoom

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For a recording of the meeting, visit www.ltc.org

Members Present

Thomas Linnehan, Chairman

Gerard Frechette, Vice Chairman, via Zoom

Caleb Cheng, Member

Robert Malavich, Member

Russell Pandres, Associate Member

Richard Lockhart, Member

Members Absent

Sinead Gallivan, Associate Member

Others Present

Fran Cigliano, Senior Planner

A quorum of the Board was present. Chairman Linnehan called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

I. Minutes for Approval

September 9, 2021

G. Frechette motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by R. Malavich, (5-0).

II. Continued Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit: 545 Broadway Street

Ernst Dorante has applied to the Planning Board on behalf of Aloisio Ramalho for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval at 545 Broadway Street. The applicant is seeking to convert an existing warehouse into a twelve (12) unit residential building. The property is in the Urban Mixed Use (UMU) zoning district. The proposal requires Special Permit and Site Plan Review approval from the Planning Board to create more than three (3) dwelling units, Variance approval from the Zoning Board for relief from dimensional and off-street parking requirements, and for any other relief required of the Lowell Zoning Ordinance. The applicant has requested a continuance to the October 18, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

On Behalf

None

Speaking in Favor

None

Speaking in Opposition

None

Discussion

None

Motion

R. Lockhart motioned to continue the petition to the October 18 meeting. G. Frechette seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, (5-0).

III. New Business

Site Plan Review and Special Permit: 116 & 128 Fletcher Street 01854

James Zorbas and Jeffrey Crowley have applied to the Planning Board for Special Permit and Site Plan Review approval to redevelop the existing structure into eleven (11) residential units at 116 & 128 Fletcher Street. The property is located in the UMU zoning district and requires Special Permit approval pursuant to Section 12.1(e) for the proposed use, and Site Plan Review pursuant to Section 11.4 to create more than three (3) dwelling units. The applicant has requested a continuance to the October 4, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

On Behalf

None

Speaking in Favor

None

Speaking in Opposition

None

Discussion

None

Motion

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to continue the petition to the October 4 meeting. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Site Plan Review and Special Permit: 44 Rock Street 01854

James Zorbas has applied to the Planning Board for Special Permit and Site Plan Review approval to redevelop the existing lot into an eleven (11) space, approximately 5,400 sq. ft. parking area at 44 Rock Street. The property is located in the UMF zoning district and requires Special Permit approval pursuant to Section 12.6(h) for the proposed use, and Site Plan Review pursuant to Section 11.4 to construct a parking area greater than 4,000 sq. ft. The applicant has requested a continuance to the October 4, 2021 Planning Board meeting.

On Behalf

None

Speaking in Favor

None

Speaking in Opposition

None

Discussion

None

Motion

R. Malavich motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to continue the petition to the October 4 meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (4-0).

Site Plan Review and Special Permit: 43 Fletcher Street 01854

Christopher Natale has applied to the Planning Board for Site Plan Review and Special Permit approval to construct a mixed-use building consisting of twenty (20) dwelling units and an approximately 3,442 sq. ft. commercial space on the first floor. The property is in the Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use (UMU) zoning district and requires Site Plan Review under Section 11.4.2., Special Permit approval under Section 12.1(e) for the proposed use and under Section 6.1.6(6) to reduce residential and non-residential parking requirements by 50%.

On Behalf

George Theodorou, Applicant's Attorney

Matt Hamor, Applicant's Engineer

Barry Ganek, Architect

Speaking in Favor

None

Speaking in Opposition

None

Discussion

G. Frechette and R. Pandres noted that they are recusing themselves from this petition

G. Theodorou and M. Hamor presented the application. G. Theodorou noted that the site is located in the Acre Urban Revitalization District. The economics warrant the height and number of units. Client will be holding the units, not selling. These will be apartments. Approximately 800 sq. ft. each. They are targeting a certain age group to occupy the units. Improvements will be made at the Lord Overpass, including improved crosswalks. This will aid foot and vehicular traffic. The proposed parking for the development will be in the HCID parking garage. There is a redevelopment occurring at 60 Fletcher Street as well. They are complementary to one another – residential and office paired together. Less than 10 minute walk to parking. The goal is not to recreate old, but to create new. One of the challenges is parking. Going to request a loading area from the city for residents to load and unload groceries. Regarding garbage pickup, they will have a collection room for trash and recycling and private trash pickup. They will also have a bike rack in the interior lobby area. They created a shadow study as requested by staff. We think it is a bold and creative project that is appropriate given the economics.

B. Ganek presented the elevations. The materials are a mix of historic materials (brick); the other is fiber cement clapboard. B. Ganek discusses the shadow study. The study depicts the building within the neighborhood context with respect to massing.

G. Theodorou added that there is a bus stop nearby in front of the old Lowell Sun building. The bus does directly to the train station.

R. Lockhart asked about the stormwater requirements. M. Hamor said that they had met with M. Stuer from the stormwater team. Would be making a direct connection to the street.

R. Malavich said that there is no parking for the commercial space. G. Theodorou said that there is metered parking on Worthen Street. There is also parking along a strip owned by the National Park. They are interested in purchasing the 7 space lot next to the subject property from the City when the opportunity arises.

R. Malavich asked about the parking spaces in the HCID garage and is concerned about availability. He does not want it to be up to the tenants to pay for parking space leases.

C. Cheng said that according to the parking letter, 40 spaces are available. Are they still looking for a SP for the parking reduction? G. Theodorou said yes.

C. Cheng asked what the landlord is willing to do to assist residents who may not have a car. Would like to see a more comprehensive TDM plan that the Board can review.

G. Theodorou reiterated that they would look to create a loading area. C. Cheng emphasized the need to be proactive with respect to TDM and requested that the applicant submit a written TDM plan. G. Theodorou agreed. C. Cheng mentioned that the bike racks are not included in the floor plans. G. Theodorou explained that they have not had time to update the floor plans, and would also add the trash/recycling area to the floor plans.

C. Cheng reiterated his request for a TDM plan and added that communication with tenants should be part of the TDM plan.

Motion

C. Cheng motioned to approve Site Plan Review with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall submit revised floor plans that show the location of bike racks and e-bikes;
2. The applicant shall work with the City Council to seek permission to add a loading area in front of the subject property;
3. The landlord shall provide parking to tenants in the HCID garage (40 residential spaces and 9 commercial);
4. The applicant shall submit revised floor plans showing the trash/recycling/waste collection room;
5. The application shall submit a TDM plan to outline alternative transportation options that will compensate for the lack of on-site parking, subject to approval by DPD staff;
6. The applicant shall receive final approval from the City's stormwater team; and
7. The application is subject to Historic Board review.

The motion was seconded by R. Lockhart and passed unanimously, (4-0).

T. Linnehan motioned to approve the Special Permit under 12.1(e) for the use with the same conditions as the Site Plan Review approval. C. Cheng seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, (4-0).

R. Malavich motioned to approve the Special Permit under Section 6.1.6(6) for the parking reduction with the same conditions as the Site Plan Review approval. R. Lockhart seconded the motion and it passed unanimously, (4-0).

IV. Other Business

Minor Modification and Extension: 555 Merrimack Street 01854

The applicant is seeking a one (1) year extension to the Site Plan Review and Special Permit approvals. They are also seeking multiple modifications to the original Site Plan approval and Special Permit. The original Site Plan Review and Special Permit approvals were issued on December 19, 2017 and were extended in 2019 for an additional two years. The applicant is now seeking a one (1) year extension until December 19, 2022.

On Behalf

Joe Clermont, Applicant's Attorney

Speaking in Favor

None

Speaking in Opposition

None

Discussion

R. Pandres noted that he is recusing himself from this petition

J. Clermont presented the application. He discussed the comments from the Lowell Fire Department and noted that they will accommodate LFD's suggestions.

J. Clermont said that their final request is regarding parking. He discussed how the first floor will now be a laundromat serving tenants, which reduces the parking requirement. Also, tenants will be recovering from substance abuse issues, so it is not likely that they would have a car. They are in close proximity to a publicly owned garage.

G. Frechette said that on the plan, it says that the space is a commercial space. J. Clermont clarified that this would only be a laundry area serving the development's tenants. G. Frechette noted that the changes do not appear to be major.

Motion

T. Linnehan motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion determining that the proposed changes constitute minor modifications. The motion passed unanimously, (4-0).

G. Frechette motioned to approve the minor modifications with the following conditions:

1. The application shall receive final approval from the Lowell Fire Department;
2. The application shall receive final approval from the City Engineer;
3. The application shall revise the parking plan as requested;
4. The applicant shall revise the floor plans to reflect that it will be a laundry space, not retail.

R. Malavich seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (5-0).

G. Frechette motioned and R. Lockhart seconded the motion to approve the extension. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0).

V. Notices

VI. Further Comments from Planning Board Members

R. Lockhart provided an update on the mural proposals for the Historic Board. Both locations were approved.

G. Frechette said that there have been a few retirements at NMCOG.

F. Cigliano provided an update on CPC applications.

VII. Adjournment

R. Lockhart motioned and R. Malavich seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, (5-0). The time was 8:07PM.